

REPORT

# INFORMATION REPORT

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25X1 1. US Information Media:

25X1 2. "Voice of America":

25X1 (1) The "Voice of America" could be heard [REDACTED] only on a powerful American radio set capable of picking up short-wave broadcasts. This eliminates from the "Voice of America" audience the average Russian, who, imagining he owns a radio set, possesses in reality only an earphone or loudspeaker connected to a central government-controlled broadcasting system. Short-wave radio sets in Russia are owned only by successful professional people, ranking government officials, and black marketers. It follows, however, that, although the audience for the "Voice of America" is small, its influence is out of proportion to its size.

25X1 (2) [REDACTED] criticized only the occasional talks on American democracy. These talks, couched in very general terms, took no account of Russian ignorance of American democracy and hence were easily distorted by Soviet propagandists. Specifically, [REDACTED] an article by Ilya Ehrenburg in which Ehrenburg made a detailed and telling criticism of such a broadcast. [REDACTED] most Soviet citizens with radios consider themselves fully informed on American democracy through Soviet broadcasts; their greatest interest is in concrete and homely aspects of life in the United States. Russians listened avidly [REDACTED] to a talk describing American substitution of labor-saving devices for servants.

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b. Amerika

- (1) The effectiveness of the magazine Amerika is out of all proportion to its circulation of 50,000 copies per month. Each copy, passed from hand to hand, is read with unbelievable interest. [redacted] the magazine could be sold on the black market for fifty rubles a copy, or ten dollars at the then official rate of exchange.
- (2) Every detail about Amerika arouses outspoken admiration - not only the contents but also the format, the quality of the paper stock, and the colored illustrations. [redacted] an American [redacted] brought the latest copy of Amerika to the hospital, where reading matter was neither available nor authorized. Accidentally seen by another patient, the magazine immediately became the object of visits from dozens of patients, nurses, doctors, and hospital employees. When attendants entered or left the room, they would invariably go over and stroke the magazine, simply as if enjoying the rich smoothness of the paper.
- (3) Russians are captivated most intensely by the thriller stories appearing in Amerika, and the inclusion of crime stories has added to the altogether incredible appeal of the magazine.

2. Free Market and Currency:

- a. Free Market: Although products when permitted to be sold on the Soviet "free market" were controlled only by supply and demand, certain items were not permitted on the free market at all. This did not prevent a lively trade in the prohibited articles; and ration cards, in particular, were bought and sold in substantial quantities. Because of the prohibitive price in rubles, many goods were bartered rather than sold.
- b. Currency: Because of the extreme difficulties encountered by a Soviet citizen in attempting to dispose of foreign currency and the Draconian measures taken against violators of currency regulations, there is comparatively little trade in foreign currency. This makes it all the more difficult for foreigners who are not members of the diplomatic service to exist in Russia. Until 1947, news correspondents were granted the diplomatic exchange rate of twelve rubles to the dollar and could pay for their cable dispatches at that rate. From 1947 on, correspondents were required to maintain a deposit of sufficient rubles converted at the official rate to cover the cost of their cables. By this move, the cable bill of a correspondent formerly averaging \$4.00 was jumped to an average of \$960.

3. Contacts with Foreigners:

- a. Journalistic Contacts: Newspaper men, except correspondents of Communist newspapers, are on the black list of Soviet authorities, and their troubles grow progressively worse. A journalist who, during and just after the war, was in frequent friendly contact with such Soviet writers as Ehrenburg and Tolstoy now finds it almost impossible to maintain even minimum contacts. Those with whom he used to be on friendly terms no longer come to his house, and confine themselves to formal politeness when unavoidably thrown into contact with him.
- b. Isolation of Westerners: [redacted] the number of Soviet persons considered absolutely loyal to be extremely small and [redacted] the government dares not risk contamination of its staff by exposing it to westerners. This is not a matter of principle, but a practical consideration dictated by fear that proximity of western citizens to Soviet nationals might undermine the loyalty of the latter.

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Conformity and Documentation:

- a. The KVD and the Suppression of Disaffection: [redacted] recent best sellers by disaffected Soviet citizens (Kravchenko's I Chose Freedom; Barinoff's One Who Survived) give a partially wrong impression of all-pervading omniscience and efficiency on the part of the KVD. The unrelenting vigilance of the KVD [redacted] affects chiefly the upper crust of officials and executives, leaving the little people more or less unaware of its vigilance, ruthlessness, and activities. The third-degree methods ascribed to the KVD would leave the average Soviet citizen incredulous or amused, because the overwhelming majority of the people have no contact with the KVD. Nevertheless, the fear of attracting unfavorable official attention is even stronger than in Nazi Germany. An "Aryan" German opposed to the Nazi regime could exist under Hitler as long as he did not display open hostility, but in the USSR it would be impossible. Any suspicion of antagonism to the Communist Party, or even of nonconformity with current trends, dooms one to swift, sure reprisals. [redacted] the example of an important orchestra conductor in Moscow, an old friend of Sergei Koussevitzky. The latter [redacted] asked that a gift of complete evening dress be taken to his colleague there. [redacted] Amazingly, the conductor begged that it be taken back, although deeply touched [redacted] and admitting it would be a very valuable addition to his professional wardrobe. He confessed that for any musician to identify himself with American clothes would at once incur the gravest risks.
- b. Voting: Although some citizens may be quite sincere in their loyalty to the regime, the almost unanimous votes cast in favor of Stalin and other members of the government are no proof. Anything other than a unanimous vote would be out of the question. There are, in the first place, no competing candidates, and the most the voter could do inside the voting booth would be to cross out a name or to tear the ballot to invalidate it. Secondly, the voter would find it impossible to stay away from the polls unobtrusively. Whether living in a city or a village, overcrowding takes privacy out of the question. Voting precincts are very small; and, since other voters from the precinct would fear the results of less than 100% representation at the polls, they would notice and report any abstention from voting. Thus, the universal pressure of fear, and not loyalty, accounts for the characteristic absence of dissent in USSR voting.

c. Conformity in Art:

- (1) In such an atmosphere of repression, creative artistic productions are doomed to mediocrity. Stage performances in Moscow [redacted] are technically superior to those in America. Costuming, scenery, and production are fine by any standards. The content of the productions, however, being required to reflect Soviet ideology, is aesthetically valueless.
- (2) The trend is especially apparent in literature, a field for which students are selected for their articulateness only. Creative imagination or depth of thought are not assets; with ideas and philosophy inspired by higher authorities, all that is required is a running pen. This does not mean each writer is presented in advance with an outline of his next book, but in practice the writers know or sense what is required and they conform.

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-4-5. Administrative Inefficiency:a. Employment

(1) The experiences [ ] are typical. Once, having taught school on a collective farm for some time, [ ] promised an assignment to a Moscow university. Instead of the University assignment, a "temporary" assignment in a city in Siberia materialized. When this job lasted indefinitely despite all pleas, [ ] went without permission to Moscow and confronted the authorities there. Although this was a direct breach of discipline, there was no action taken [ ] because of sheer administrative inefficiency.

(2) [ ] particularly impressed, in 1946 and 1947, with the way in which overall inefficiency drained everyone's ambition. Higher positions and advancement were shunned, not because of risk of involvement with the MVD but because universal inefficiency could frustrate the best-laid plans and doom the planner. Entertaining and imaginative persons, knowing they would be unavoidably forced to failure, discouragement, and eventual demotion, preferred to vegetate in obscure positions.

c. Hospital Conditions: [ ] deplorable hospital conditions. Despite rigid rules on sterilization, for example, surgeons were forced to immerse their hands in iodine for lack of alcohol or usual antiseptics. Judging from this and from the extremely high price of alcoholic drinks on the free market, alcohol must be in very short supply. Patients, on admission to hospitals, are divested of all clothing and left naked in the dressing rooms. The little clothing they are finally issued is so tattered that it leaves their nakedness essentially unchanged.

b. Deterioration of Housing: [ ] disrepair of many apartment houses built only ten years ago. Buildings new in the 1930's were, either through lack of direct personal interest or because of general inefficiency, all unpainted and in urgent need of repairs. Staircases were dilapidated to the point of danger.

d. Working Hours: Although official working hours for government officials do not exceed eight, higher executives will work only during the night hours. This forces the underlings to work not only their own daylight shift but also the night shift along with the bosses. The higher executives take their cue in this aberration from the leaders of the regime, and the tragic comedy results in thousands working all day and most of the night because of the whim of a handful.

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